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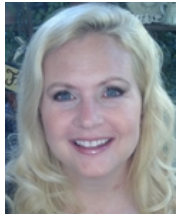
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Thursday, October 31 2013

Are You a Liberal Mormon?

By Joni Hilton

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Long before the word “liberal” found its way into politics, it simply meant “broad-minded.” Liberal thinkers were open to change and progress, a bit resistant to traditional ways and dogmas, and considered themselves a tad more intellectual than stodgy folks who preferred the status quo. Liberal folks fancied themselves less judgmental, more accepting and more inclusive.

Liberal people had been to Europe and let you knew it. They had Continental tastes, exposure to the latest fashions, and eagerly embraced whatever was new and exciting. They were the daring crowd, the ones who were unafraid to live life on the edge. Bohemians, free thinkers, beatniks, hippies—all prided themselves on being open to take risks and throw off convention.

I think I was a child when I first heard the term, “Liberal Mormon.” It meant people who were of our faith, but who drew their own lines in the sand. They decided which aspects of our faith to accept or reject, from honoring the Sabbath to wearing less than modest clothing. Basically, it described people who were members of convenience. When they didn’t like something the Prophet said, they felt perfectly fine skirting around that one, and writing their own rules.

“Jack Mormon” is a similar phrase, usually applied to people who don’t obey our rules (particularly Word of Wisdom rules) or who consider themselves Mormon, but never attend church. Jack Mormons are obvious about it, too—you see them staggering out of a bar, or heading into the shopping mall on Sundays.

Liberal Mormons are more slippery. They often attend church, but they’re the ones who dodge Gospel Doctrine class because the teacher is “so by-the-book.” This criticism is meant to imply that he’s a dolt who never questions anything, so why should I attend a class taught by someone so narrow-minded?

They disagree with several points in the Proclamation to the World, say no to callings that insult their intelligence, and create their own spin on how God will ultimately judge us (very leniently, usually). They think bikinis are fine, iced tea is a tasty drink, and R-rated movies are often artistic and worth seeing.

Invariably liberal Mormons do not read their scriptures every day. They do not attend the temple, they do not show up to help someone move, and they do not Home Teach or Visit Teach with regularity. They view those who do as quaint minions who never question authority and who follow the rules like mindless sheep. The one thing they

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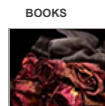
By DeNae Handy



ENTERTAINMENT

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By William Fortune



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What would psychology be like if God mattered?

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Dream comes true for Utah's 'short-shorts' dad following international reaction to viral photo

By Joni Hilton

South Jordan family raising money to help

do subscribe to with gusto, however, is free agency. In fact, free agency is their justification for the Designer Gospel they have refurbished to suit their individual tastes.

We all know members like this. What they don't seem to grasp, in all their enlightened brilliance, is that they are playing right into Satan's hands. Satan wants them to feel proud and superior, to scoff at the seemingly picky rules we have. They've forgotten that Christ runs this church, not mortals. God's laws are unchangeable and eternal, not somebody's notions that sway in the breeze and adapt to each new social trend.

Former Young Women President, Elaine Cannon, once said, "When the Prophet speaks, the debate is over." This is because the prophet is speaking for God and telling us what He would have us hear. He is not just the president of a corporation, giving us his personal views.

When we pray for a testimony and get the answer that this church is exactly what it claims to be—the restored gospel of Jesus Christ—then we need to embrace every part of it. This is not a smorgasbord of ideas from which we choose; it is the grand feast God has prepared, of which we are privileged to partake.

Faith, obedience, commitment—these take effort, sometimes against gale-force storms. Those unwilling to sacrifice and work will fall by the wayside, then claim it's where the wiser folks actually belong. But being outside the mainstream is not a badge of honor; it's actually an admittance of weakness.

Living in the gray area, the fringe, takes little-- if any-- effort. Like laziness, it spawns rationalization, something the obedient never have to worry about. The dedicated members don't have to excuse or explain themselves; they simply continue working, inching along on the path Christ outlined. Only when we stray do we feel we have to justify our choices. Perhaps that's one way to tell if you're at risk. Only the Liberal Mormons feel the need to explain their twist on faith.

Just in time for Christmas shopping—order Hilton's new book, "Wishes for an LDS Child" at <http://bit.ly/1g7YXYj>

Joni Hilton is also "Your YouTube Mom" and shares short videos that teach easy household tips and life skills at

<http://bit.ly/YourYouTubeMom>

Be sure to read her blog at jonihilton.blogspot.com.

Hilton currently serves as a Relief Society President.

Teen sexting family raising money to help quadruplet with health problems
By Rosemary G. Palmer

New Harmony: Tapping into the spirit of the Spirit of Elijah
By Joni Hilton

In the autumn years of his life, 92-year-old keeps farming
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33 Comments

Kent Busse makes this comment
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In 1961 the University of Chicago drummed the word "liberal" out of my vocabulary insofar as it might be used to label people. I invite readers not to define the word in church context, and above all not to assign the label to specific individuals. Now regarding my own spiritual condition, may I propose the way Quakers take stock: "Art Thou faithful?" That is a question I ask myself before every home teaching contact (several per month per family) and from one temple visit to the next. Yet in declining to see people judgmentally I will be labeled "liberal" by those who use labels.

Buffy Snell makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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Love it!

Senior missionary makes this comment

Are You a Liberal Mormon?

Thursday, 31 October 2013

I love your articles and I agree with much of what you said in this one. So I'm not being crabby when I say that our testimonies aren't all alike or the way we live our lives. Look at the diversity on the "I'm a Mormon" campaign. I'm currently on my third mission in a faraway land and the gospel net is gathering all kinds of people who have amazing testimonies which come in truly miraculous ways. Our Latter-day Saint culture can cause a lot of narrow-mindedness if we are not careful in judging others. Sometimes when our most recent convert was asked prying questions by missionaries who wanted the "right" answer he would just say "I'm working that out with God". Bravo for him!

Brandy makes this comment

Are You a Liberal Mormon?

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I do believe you have not only drank the koolade but may have fallen in...but...if it works for you. I just don't really like being generalized as sinful and lazya.aa..

John Taber makes this comment

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So if I fit even one of those categories, or disagree with you on any one point (even if it's not related to the core of the Gospel), I should just resign my Church membership? Please don't paint those you don't like with such a broad brush.

Jo makes this comment

Are You a Liberal Mormon?

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Matthew 7:1-3

Carl Youngblood makes this comment

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In my experience, while there are definitely some conservative believers who still faithfully follow the program, there are far more who simply go with the flow, don't study or know their religion well and don't love and serve others very much. On the other hand, the liberal Mormons I know who still attend church tend to have a more thorough understanding of Church history and doctrine and are among the most passionate members of the class. They have to fight to stay, since they are often so despised by their fellow ward members. I have also found them to be among those who most love and serve their fellow ward members, as well as the larger community. Joni, I really feel like you are leaning towards phariseeism here. What you have published is highly judgemental and just completely wrong. You can't judge a member merely by how well they fit in with your cultural expectations. Sometimes the ones who least fit in are the ones who are most trying to do things for the right reasons instead of merely going with the flow. Heaven is not characterized by sameness but by fullness. We build Zion by sharing our unique talents with the world, not by conforming to a universal standard of Mormonness.

David Still makes this comment

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Wow! Started this comment several times and then decided it wasn't worth it. Love one another.

Blair makes this comment

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Liberalism is the wrong label to put on the kind of behavior condemned in this article. Conservatism might be the label put on scribes and Pharisees in Christ's earthly lifetime. Neither group's behavior measures up to the standards of Christ's gospel. I know many political liberals who have great concern for their fellow men and some conservatives who are angry and intolerant. And I know those who are the opposite in both camps. We will fail to live as Christ taught if we measure ourselves against any standard but His. I don't think this article is using the right standard. It feels angry. Anger is not persuasive, love is.

Benjamin makes this comment

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I suppose some who use the term "liberal Mormon" use it in the way you've suggested. I worry about that, because it automatically puts anyone who claims the title of "liberal Mormon" in a bad light. I typically consider myself to be a liberal Mormon, and yet I read scriptures every day, attend the temple, Home Teach, go to Sunday School, etc. I view Joseph Smith as quite a liberal Mormon. The simple truth is, not every liberal Mormon is someone you will see "staggering out of a bar" or scoffing at their peers. Perhaps you will reject the idea that I am a liberal Mormon, since I do not fit your criteria. Well, okay. But I suspect there are many self-proclaimed liberal Mormons who do not fit the stereotypes presented here. And that seems problematic for your view.

Brian makes this comment

Are You a Liberal Mormon?

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I used to think just like this... I believed that obedience really was the biggest part of the gospel. It eventually ended up practically destroying my faith entirely.

James makes this comment

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No

[Lisa](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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I thought President Uchtdorf was welcoming all back to Church?

[Regina](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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I live my life as I think Christ would have me live. I try to live with compassion for the least of those around me. I try to be humble and teachable. I read my scriptures in an effort to understand how I can best emulate the Savior. And I am a Liberal Mormon. So I don't fit your description. Perhaps if you tried to see me as the Savior sees me, you would paint a different picture.

[Ian Cook](#) makes this comment
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This seems like a fairly insulting article. President Uchtdorf gave a wonderful talk about accepting less actives and those who think differently back into the church. This article is in the exact opposite spirit as his talk.

[Kathy](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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I don't consider myself a liberal or progressive Mormon, but I wouldn't disrespect the "type" as you do. At worst, they have some of the vices that you describe. But at best, they emulate Jesus rather than the Pharisee. They believe that questioning isn't a sign of weakness, but an act of faith. They remind us that not all Utah Mormon cultural trappings are Gospel doctrine, that the Church doesn't officially endorse the Republican Party, and that following conscience is more important than fitting in at church. How about, instead of belittling "liberal Mormons", we make sure that Elder Uchtdorf's words are true: "There is room for you here."

[ScottT](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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Why demonize the word "liberal"? Alma 1:30 - And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were LIBERAL to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need."

[Melissa](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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Jesus said love everyone. And judge not. President Uchtdorf said there is room for all of us in the church. Hopefully some day these messages will be accepted and lived by church members.

[Brett](#) makes this comment
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I'm sorry, but I think you are way off base on this one. I know for a fact that in my ward we have had people who would likely consider themselves "liberal Mormons" (though less likely to actually use labels) attending, worshiping, and serving faithfully. We have had liberal Mormons as RS president, EQ president, and Bishopric counselor. These are people who work hard at their faith and are true disciples of Christ. I think it would be useful to compare and contrast this article to what President Uchtdorf said in the most recent General Conference.

[TE](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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'Our Heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive.' -Joseph Smith

[Josh](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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I personally know many liberal, tithe-paying, temple-attending, home teaching members. You're just making liberal members a boogeyman. I find this to be very distasteful.

[James Cook](#) makes this comment
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Joni, I would rather you spend more of your time writing about how Jesus loves us, what kind of love it is and how much his sacrifice meant to us. I would rather you spend more of your focus glorifying God, lifting Jesus up to show others the free love he offers and commands for us to spread across the world. Do that, and let God be the judge of people, instead of focusing on trivial matters which are just irrelevant to salvation. Too much time is wasted focusing on personal exaltation, instead of glorifying the exalted God and his son Jesus, spreading the love that they offer freely to

all mankind.

[Ben](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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Christ in his time would have been considered Liberal. I know that seems hard for a ton of conservatives to swallow but think about it. He changed and pushed a new religious agenda. Wait he is the son of god it was his right to do so. Say what you will of his divinity but he did change the convention of the day. Sorry Christ was a liberal.

[Joni Hilton](#) makes this comment
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To clarify: I am not criticizing politically liberal people, only those who wish to rewrite the commandments to suit their purposes, and then justify it under the label of being broad minded. We should all be liberal in our fast offerings, liberal with forgiveness, etc. Here the word "liberal" means disobedient. Of course I agree with President Uchtdorf's talk; we want everyone to come unto Christ, and/or come back. But narrow is the way, and those who think "anything goes," when our leaders have specifically addressed it, are simply mistaken.

[Wade](#) makes this comment
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Someone above said it best: "Perhaps if you could see me the way Christ sees me," you'd paint liberal Mormons in a different light or, you'd probably not have written this at all. I think Uchtdorf nailed this one last conference. I'm grateful for that talk, and the principle of big-tent Mormonism.

[Jeff](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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Christ was a liberal Jew. Just sayin . . .

[Angela](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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Please don't use labels unless you know how to apply them correctly. What you describe is not liberal Mormonism but spiritual apostasy. The two are not related.

[Lynn](#) makes this comment
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Joni, the problem is that "liberal" does "not" mean "disobedient" and etymologically speaking, never has. It is neither accurate nor kind to attach your unique and judgmental definition to the word... particularly since you know good and well that there are faithful Latter-day Saints who own the label.

[Ralph Malph](#) makes this comment
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Joni tries to clarify: ///Here the word "liberal" means disobedient./// Then you might be better off simply using the term "disobedient" instead of the loaded term "liberal."

[Brad](#) makes this comment
Are You a Liberal Mormon?
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Having moved to Utah 4 years ago after growing up in the West and living in the East. I keep experiencing Mormon Culture shock here. A member all my life, I can't accept the stereotyping judgements that help this author develop an "us vs. them" way of dividing members of the church . This can't be the best way to live our religion.

[PianoChick](#) makes this comment
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The word "liberal" absolutely does not mean disobedient. Where did you even come up with that definition? I describe myself as a liberal Mormon. I am on time to church with my family every week. I serve faithfully in the primary presidency. We have spiritual time which includes scripture study daily with our children. I identify politically as liberal. Republican politics make me uncomfortable for many reasons, and while I don't vote party lines (I identify as Green Party so that's pretty hard to do) I rarely vote for a Republican. If you meant a different definition other than politically liberal, you should have used another word. Because liberal is not the word you're looking for here.

[chris](#) makes this comment
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I've known a liberal Mormon or two who could be counted among the most reliable to show up. I've known many conservatives who never show up. I still think the liberals are often wrong in their approach. And I think the conservatives often are too, but generally they get more right than wrong because they are following the prophet, so to speak. But in following the prophet I'd say most of the conservatives I know still miss the big picture and get it wrong at a foundational level, while still appearing to have it right. Both counts for something right? Which goes to show... we're all imperfect humans who fall short.

Chelle makes this comment

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Joni, It is narrow and judgmental attitudes like the one you displayed here, in this article that make people feel that there is no place for them in the LDS church and then they subsequently leave it. Your attitude and contempt for your fellow brothers and sisters is in sharp contrast to both Elder Uchtdorf's talk this past conference and to Jesus's teachings throughout his life. In the future please consider a more charitable and loving approach to your articles so you can lift others up, instead of tearing them down.

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